VISIT…

A HARVEST OF EVIL

A short adventure for four 10th- to 12th- level player characters

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Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and on the new edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison.

d20 system

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INTRODUCTION

A *Harvest of Evil* is a short adventure for four 10th- to 12th-level characters. The adventure can be made more or less difficult by utilizing any one or a combination of several methods:

- Increasing or decreasing the wizard levels of the main antagonist, Deskryn.
- Increasing or decreasing the number of Deskryn's mortal minions.
- Increasing or decreasing the number of townsfolk affected by Deskryn's *domination*.
- Add vampire spawn under Deskryn's thrall.
- Increasing or decreasing Deskryn's relative strength.

To tailor the encounter to specific groups of different levels, refer to Table 4-1 in the DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide*.

The adventure is set in a tiny and remote community located in a temperate forest, but easily adapts to any similarly isolated locale or region in existing campaigns. A map of a community and graveyard suitable for this adventure is available for download at <http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/mapofweek/TheSecretGraveyard.jpg>. If you require a broader geographic setting for the community, a map of such an area is available at <http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/mapofweek/TheJourney.jpg>. These maps are reprinted here for your convenience.

INTRODUCTION

Twin Oaks is a tiny, sleepy little thorp located just within the sheltering eaves of a great forest. Home to an extended family clan of farmers and woodcutters, the community was founded within living memory and since its creation the inhabitants have known only peace and prosperity. But just as the gentle breezes of late summer can transform rapidly into the deadly storms of autumn, dark times have come suddenly to Twin Oaks, in the person of Deskryn, a vampire who finds himself on the run from deadly enemies.

Just two nights ago, as the good folk of Twin Oaks prepared for the annual harvest, Deskryn's castle home was invaded by an intrepid band of adventurers led by a noble paladin. Although the party did not achieve its goal of slaying the vampire himself, they managed to drive him from his lair and force him to flee into the night with only the barest fraction of his former resources in tow. Unfortunately for the good folk of Twin Oaks, theirs was the community onto which the

vampire stumbled first, and it is here that the fiends have taken refuge. The little settlement offers the displaced vampire all that he needs: shelter from the hateful light of the sun, a selection of new servants, and a supply of fresh mortal blood.

Even in his current condition, Deskryn alone is more than a match for the inhabitants of the thorp; but his best hope of survival lies not in conquest, but in secrecy. He plans to hide in Twin Oaks until he believes it safe to leave; then, he can begin plotting his revenge on the hateful paladin and her compatriots who brought him to this lowly state. As for the citizens of the thorp, they are all but helpless in the face of this powerful enemy. The vampire has already slaked his unholy thirst on one of their number, and his minions have taken hostages to ensure that the inhabitants do as they are told. All the folk of Twin Oaks hope that Deskryn will take what he wants and then leave them in peace, but few of them believe that such hopes are realistic. Until Deskryn has satisfied himself that the coast is clear, Twin Oaks—and its people—belong to him.

The Thorp of Twin Oaks
This tiny community follows the rules noted for a town of its size in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* in Chapter 4.

Twin Oaks (Thorp): Conventional; AL NG; 40 gp limit; Assets 40 gp; Population 21 adults; Mixed (human 20 [95%], half-elf 1 [5%]). Authority figures: Chief Councilwoman Vandra, female human Com4. Important characters: Wat Nockle Bumor, male human Com4 (tavern keeper and councilman); Lobbur Thoris, male human Com3 (farmer and councilman); Jezzor, female half-elf Exp3 (carpenter).

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

A *Harvest of Evil* is a tragedy in progress. The little thorp of Twin Oaks has just received a most unwelcome visitor: Deskryn, a vampire fighter, whose malice is as great as his mercy is feeble. He has come to Twin Oaks because a crusading paladin and her companions destroyed his haven two nights ago, obliging him to flee into the howling wilderness with only what he and a few mortal servants could carry on their backs. Deskryn plans to hole up in the settlement until he thinks it's safe to return to his lair (he hopes that perhaps the meddlesome paladin didn't find everything that was hidden therein). The PCs are not aware of the vampire's presence and goals at first, but they soon discover clues that make the awful truth inescapable. It is up to the PCs to free Twin Oaks from Deskryn's grasp. The adventure begins when the PCs arrive in Twin Oaks only a short time after the vampire has established himself in the community. The action proceeds from there, with Deskryn trying to avoid attracting the attention of the PCs while still achieving his goal. When the PCs learn too much and unravel the secret of Twin Oaks, the battle will be joined as the vampire attempts to eliminate those who could bring about his destruction.

PREPARATION

You, the Dungeon Master (DM), need a copy of the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual* to use this adventure. If you plan to set the adventure in Faerûn , you'll need a copy of the new *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information, which you may read aloud or paraphrase when appropriate. Unshaded boxes contain important information for you, including special instructions. Monster and NPC statistics are provided with each encounter in full.

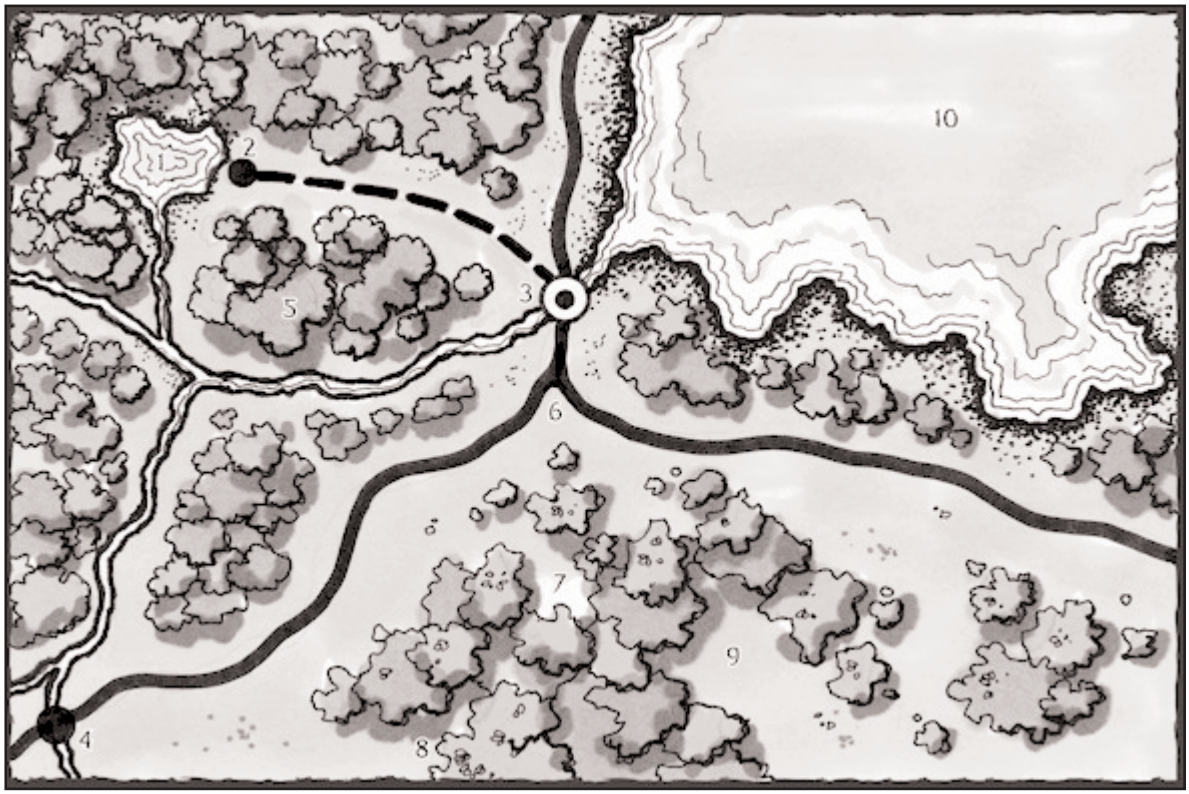
Monster and NPC statistics are provided with each encounter in abbreviated form or, where appropriate, the proper page in the Monster Manual is referenced.

Should you wish to develop the adventure beyond what is presented here, the best opportunity for doing so is to focus on Deskryn as a recurring antagonist.

CHARACTER HOOKS

This is a good adventure to spring on your PCs when they are traveling between other scenarios. It's very easy to insert it into an existing campaign any time the player characters (PCs) are making their way through forested area en route to another destination. Alternately, Deskryn can be the central antagonist in a longer story that you devise. Use the following hooks and rumors to draw the PCs into the encounter.

- An unexpected event, such as a severe storm strands the PCs in Twin Oaks. Seeking shelter, they stumble onto the thorp. It is a welcome sight, offering hot food and dry beds. They perceive quickly, however, that something is dreadfully wrong here.
- Another, completely unrelated errand or mission brings the PCs into Twin Oaks. Perhaps they are traveling from place to place and choose to spend the night here because it is located conveniently on their route of travel, or perhaps they have direct business with one of the inhabitants.
- The PCs are pursuing Deskryn and have tracked him to the vicinity of Twin Oaks. Since the news of the paladin's victory has spread, a hue and cry has gone up across the countryside, calling for all heroes to seek out and destroy the fleeing vampire.



At least one noble has offered a respectable reward for reliable news of Deskryn's whereabouts.

THE COMMUNITY OF TWIN OAKS

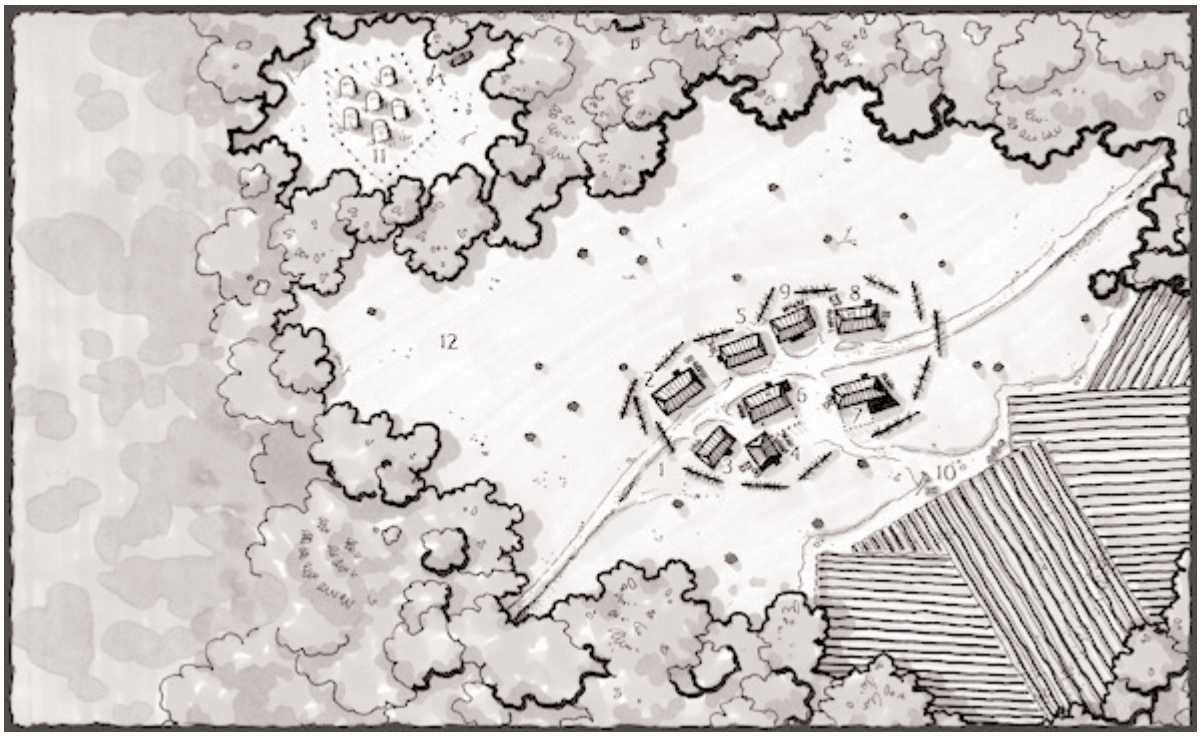
Twin Oaks is situated just within the northernmost eaves of a great forest. A narrow cart track leads from the edge of the woods three miles to the thorp, winding its way carefully between the boles of the huge oak, hickory, maple, and birch trees that tower above the forest floor. The path continues onward past the thorp, plunging deeper into the forest and leading to the areas where the Twin Oaks woodcutters fell trees to make lumber.

The thorp itself is a collection of only eight buildings, arranged in a rough circle and surrounded by a ring of protective stiles (see 1., below). The community has cleared approximately three acres of forestland to the southeast of the town for agriculture. The wooden houses that are the homes to Twin Oaks' inhabitants appear to be ordinary farmsteads, but their craftsmanship is better than the average huts and shacks one normally finds in communities of this size (a testimony to the skill and dedication of Jezzor, the local carpenter).

THE FOREST

The forestland surrounding the town of Twin Oaks is predominantly deciduous with little undergrowth. Presume for the purposes of this encounter that the season is mid-autumn, or whatever constitutes the time of harvest for your campaign world, and that the weather is still clement. If you wish to create a more pronounced sense of drama or urgency, you can determine that a severe storm is brewing (or indeed has already struck).

As the PCs make their way through the woods, there is a 50% chance that they will encounter on the path one of the Twin Oaks farmers that he has enslaved to his will through *domination* and sent out into the forest to watch for signs that the paladin and her party are on his trail. Through the telepathic link established by this power, Deskryn knows generally what these servants are experiencing. There are a total of four farmers out in the woods at any given time of day or night (in the evening they use lanterns to light their way). The farmers will treat any encountered PCs with neutrality, unless the characters state that they are pursuing Deskryn, in which case they will immediately attempt to flee back to the thorp in order to warn their master.



The forest is presumably inhabited by a number of other creatures, and you should determine which random encounters best suit your goals for this adventure and your campaign world.

DESKRYN'S ACTIVITIES

Hounded by agents of good and deprived of the resources to which he has grown accustomed, Deskryn is a desperate creature indeed. As such he is at his most dangerous, and is prepared to do whatever is necessary to ensure his own survival. By day, Deskryn slumbers in the root cellar of The Plow, the thorp's only tavern; he is guarded by one of his retainers and a pair of young farmhands whom he has enslaved with his powers of *domination*. He rises each night after sunset to confer with his minions, slake his thirst for blood, and plan his next moves. When he is convinced that the paladin is not following him, he will move on; but he may well drain dry each and every inhabitant of Twin Oaks first, leaving behind a ghost town of rotting crops and dead victims.

So far he has not striven to create vampire spawn, but he may change his mind if the PCs exhibit an interest in the condition of the community. Since he can't risk exposure, Deskryn will attempt to stalk and eliminate the PCs—preferably one-by-one—so that they cannot bring word of his location to the outside world.

Deskryn's Minions (EL Variable [4-10])

Deskryn managed to flee his former haven along with five of his minions. This quintet now functions as the vampire's bodyguard, enforcers, and servants. They introduce themselves to curious PCs mercenary soldiers who are staying at the tavern for a few nights as they journey southward in search of employment; the tavern keeper will support this story out of fear of what might happen to him or his family should he do otherwise.

Elreden, Guthwine, Jethla, and Norbert, human mercenaries (4): Ftr4, Medium-size humanoids, NE.

Phulbit, human mercenary: Rog8, Medium-size humanoid, NE. Phulbit is Deskryn's cohort and entirely loyal to him.

Use the statistics for NPC fighters and rogues that appear in Chapter 2 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. During the day, one of the servants remains in the tavern's root cellar as Deskryn's bodyguard; one of the remaining four checks on him periodically throughout the day, bringing food and drink and giving him a chance to take a short break, one of the remaining three watches over the hostages in one of the farmhouses (See area 6.).

Meanwhile, the other two keep an eye on the population of Deskryn, making sure that none of them do

anything foolish like attempting to escape the thorp. They are prepared to kill any of the townsfolk who do not follow their master's instructions.

The arrival of the PCs will prove a considerable worry to the vampire's guards. But all they can reasonably do is stick to their story, try to prevent any of the locals from giving the game away, and rely on their master to come up with a plan to deal with the interlopers.

KEY TO TWIN OAKS

1. The Stiles

X-shaped wooden fences sport sharpened, fire-hardened wooden shafts. They mark the boundary between the forest and cultivated lands.

To afford themselves some measure of protection again the dangerous creatures that inhabit the forest, and that venture near the community from time to time, the inhabitants of Twin Oaks have built a ring of stiles around their homes. Each stile is similar to a section of wooden fencing, built with X-shaped crosspieces that support a single, long fencepost. They have mounted on each fencepost numerous fire-hardened and sharpened wooden stakes, each about 2 feet long. Each stile weighs approximately 50 pounds, and is fully mobile: It can be picked up and carried to any desired location. There are narrow gaps between each stile, large enough for a single Medium-sized creature to slip through without harm.

2. The Plow Tavern

The largest building in Twin Oaks is this two-story wooden structure with a slate roof. Over its front doorway hangs a broad wooden sign depicting a plow at rest atop a furrow of freshly turned earth.

Here the tavern keeper, Bumor, and his family (wife and three children, though the latter are now the captives of Deskryn), offers a limited number of home-brewed ales and beers along with steaming plates of wholesome local food and forest game at dinnertime. The fare is simple but filling and sold very reasonable cost; Bumor also accepts goods and services offered in barter, a necessary economic adjustment in such a small community.

The Plow consists of a small taproom, kitchen, and storage room on the main floor. A narrow stair leads from the kitchen to the upper story, where Bumor and his family sleep. A stout wooden door leads from the storage room down into the root cellar, and it is there that Deskryn sleeps during the daylight hours.

At least one of Deskryn's loyal servants remains in the taproom at all times during the day, to deter the locals from entering the root cellar. If the PCs attempt to search The Plow, neither Bumor nor the vampire's minions will interfere. Should they try to gain access to the root cellar, however, Bumor will implore them not to put his family in danger; he is so fearful of the vampire, however, that he won't reveal to the PCs what is sleeping below his feet. Deskryn's minions will attempt to prevent the PCs from gaining access to the root cellar by force if necessary.

3. Farmhouse

Each of the farmhouses in Twin Oaks is similar to all the others, built from timber supplied by the forest and constructed in two stories.

The inhabitants have taken to hiding in their homes day and night since Deskryn's arrival, and as dusk approaches they all huddle together in their common rooms in hope that theirs will not be the home the vampire chooses to visit next. These folk are so terrified of what is happening in their once-peaceful community that they dare not reveal the secret, even in return for the promise of aid. They have seen how easily the vampire can rob a person of her will, and how quickly he can strike: they know that their only hope lies in remaining silent and hoping that the monster departs their community in haste.

This building houses the family of the local carpenter, a female half-elf named Jezzor.

4. Farmhouse

See area 3.

5. Farmhouse

See area 3.

6. Farmhouse (Hostages)

See area 3.

To provide himself with a greater degree of surety for the actions of the frightened farmers (and knowing that children are less likely than adults to obey commands of silence for extended periods of time), Deskryn ordered his minions to gather all the local children here and hold them hostage for their parents' good behavior. One of his minions is always on guard

in this house, making sure that none of the children — all of whom are bound and gagged — attempt to escape. The children are given bread and water twice a day, one at a time, to minimize escape attempts. If Deskryn believes that the PCs are strong enough to defeat him, he has no compunctions about using the children's plight as a bargaining chip.

This had been the home of Chief Councilwoman Vandra and her family. The adults are now staying in area 9.

7. Smithy & Stables

This building is larger than the nearby farmhouses. Wooden walls shelter it on three sides. It appears to be the town's only smithy and stables.

An outbuilding sheltered on three sides by wooden walls serves as the only smithy and stables in Twin Oaks. There are six workhorses here, all of them nervous and apprehensive at the proximity of the living dead. It's clear to the observant (Spot Check DC 12) that the smithy is idle, and that the forge hasn't been lit for several days. The smith, Hedvynn, is like his fellows hiding in his home.

8. Farmhouse

See area 3.

The local smith from area 7 lives in this building.

9. Farmhouse

See area 3.

Councilman Lobbur Thoris lives here with his family. Chief councilwoman Vandra and the adults in her family have come here because their home is the hostage site. Vandra is *dominated* by Deskryn.

10. Cultivated Fields

Sharp-eyed PCs will note that although the season is right, none of the crops in these fields have yet been harvested (Spot Check DC 12). A closer inspection (Spot Check DC 15) reveals that some of the crops are actually beginning to die on the vine, and that an immediate harvest is essential to prevent further spoilage.

11. Graveyard (EL Varies [0-4])

Set away from the town, five older graves, and one very fresh one, mark the location of the Twin Oaks graveyard.

All five of the older graves are marked by weathered headstones proclaiming their names and the fact that each of the dead perished within the last 10 years. The newest grave, however, is unmarked—there has been neither time nor opportunity to craft a headstone for the unfortunate person who died at the hands of Deskryn two nights ago. If the PCs exhume the body, they will have little difficulty in determining the cause of death, thanks to the telltale puncture wounds on the neck of the corpse and the obvious, bloodless pallor of the skin. Two days after the PCs arrive, the body will rise as a vampire spawn.

12. Common Green (EL 12)

Normally this wide strip of grassy land is used for grazing the thorp's livestock, and that much is clear to any PC who succeeds in a Spot Check or Animal Handling check (DC 15 to identify the signs of grazing animals). All the cattle, goats, pigs, and chickens have wandered off into the forest, however, since they were left to their own devices when the local folk took to hiding in their homes. Any PC with Tracking may attempt to locate the larger livestock (DC 14 per animal; finding a lost animal requires 2d6 hours).

DESKRYN

Deskryn: Male vampire refugee Ftr10; CR 12; Medium-size undead; HD 10d12+3; hp 96; Init +8; Spd 20 ft.; AC 30 (touch 11, flat-footed 29); Atk +16 melee (1d6+6, slam); or +17/+12 melee (1d8+7/19–20, *+1 longsword*), or +16/+11 ranged (1d8+6/x3, *+1 mighty* (+4 Str bonus) *flaming burst composite longbow* with *+1 arrows*); SA Blood drain, domination, energy drain; SQ Alternate form, children of the night, cold resistance 20, create spawn, damage reduction 15/+1, electricity resistance 20, fast healing 5, gaseous form, spider climb, turn resistance +4, undead traits; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +7; Str 23, Dex 18, Con —, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +11, Climb +13, Hide +7, Jump +10, Listen +13, Move Silently +11, Ride (horse) +16, Search +10, Sense Motive +11, Spot +13, Swim +11; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Cleave , Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Sunder, Toughness.

Blood Drain (Ex): Deskryn can suck blood from a

living victim with his fangs by making a successful grapple check. If he pins his foe, he drains blood, inflicting 1d4 points of permanent Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained.

Domination (*Su*): Deskryn can crush an opponent's will just by looking into his or her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that Deskryn must take a standard action, and those merely looking at him are not affected. Anyone he targets must succeed at a Will save or fall instantly under his influence as though by a *dominate person* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. The ability has a range of 30 feet.

Energy Drain (*Su*): Living creatures hit by Deskryn's slam attack suffer 2 negative levels.

Alternate Form (*Su*): Deskryn can assume the shape of a bat, dire bat, wolf, or dire wolf as a standard action. This ability is similar to a *polymorph self* spell cast by a 12th level sorcerer, except that Deskryn can assume only one of the forms listed here. He can remain in that form until he assumes another or until the next sunrise.

Children of the Night (*Su*): Deskryn can command the lesser creatures of the world and once per day can call forth a pack of 4d8 dire rats, a swarm of 10d10 bats, or a pack of 3d6 wolves as a standard action. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the vampire for up to 1 hour.

Create Spawn (*Su*): A humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by Deskryn's energy drain attack rises as a vampire spawn (see the *Monster Manual* Vampire Spawn entry) 1d4 days after burial. If Deskryn instead drains the victim's Constitution to 0 or less, the victim returns as a spawn if it had 4 or fewer HD and as a vampire if it had 5 or more HD. In either case, the new vampire or spawn is under Deskryn's command and remains enslaved until its master's death.

Fast Healing (*Ex*): Deskryn regains hit points at 5 points of damage each round so long as he has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit points or lower, he automatically assumes *gaseous form* and attempts to escape. He must reach his coffin home within 2 hours or be utterly destroyed. (He can travel up to nine miles in 2 hours.) Once at rest in his coffin, he rises to 1 hit point after 1 hour, then resumes healing at the rate of 5 hit points per round.

Gaseous Form (*Su*): As a standard action, Deskryn can assume *gaseous form* at will, as the spell cast by a 5th-level sorcerer, but can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability.

Spider Climb (*Ex*): Deskryn can climb sheer surfaces as though with a *spider climb* spell.

Undead Traits: Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death, effects, necromantic effects, mind-influencing effects, and any effect requiring a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects; not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain; negative energy heals; not at risk of death from massive damage, but destroyed at 0 hit points or less; darkvision 60 ft.; cannot be raised; resurrection works only if creature is willing.

Possessions: *+2 full plate armor*, *+1 large metal shield*, *+1 longsword*, *+1 mighty* (+4 Str bonus) *flaming burst composite longbow*, twenty-five *+1 arrows*, *potion of endurance*, *cloak of resistance* +1.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Carl has been alternately a freelance and professional writer in the RPG industry for six years, and an avid gamer for much longer than that. He's written for a number of game lines, most notably DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and White Wolf's *Mind's Eye Theatre*. Currently, he is the Tournament Director for WizKids Games.